

Disposition of Remains Report: Chihuahua

Part I. Name of Country: Mexico

Part II. U.S. Consulate Information

U.S. Consulate

Address: Paseo de la Victoria #3650, Fracc. Partido Senecú, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico

Mailing address: P.O. Box 10545, El Paso, TX 79995

Phone: Country Code 52 Area Code 656-227-3000 (24 hour Switchboard)

American Citizen Services phone: Country Code 52 Area Code 656-227-3411 (business hours)

Fax: Country Code 52 Area Code 656-227-3264 (American Citizen Services)

[State Department Travel Information](#)

[Smart Travel Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)

Part III. Profile of religions of the host country and religious services available to visitors

Country Profile: Visit the State Department's web page on [Mexico](#).

Religions: Roman Catholicism is Mexico's principal religion with around 76.5% of its total population adhering to its beliefs, 6.3% Protestant, 0.3% other, 13.8% unspecified, and 3.1% who don't practice any religion.

Part IV. [Funeral directors, mortician and related services available in the State of Chihuahua](#)

Part V. Profile of services available in Chihuahua regarding preparation and shipment of remains

Burial or cremation is the norm in Chihuahua. Due to limited refrigerated storage facilities available at police stations and hospitals, prompt arrangements for the transfer of the body to a funeral home are required soon after a death.

1. Maximum period before burial/cremation

Article 348 of the Ley General de Salud (Health Law) states that the burial or cremation of a corpse can only be done with the authorization of the appropriate Civil Registry official, and also requires the Mexican Death Certificate. The burial or cremation should take place within 48 hours from the time of death, unless the appropriate authority approves otherwise. The scarcity of refrigerated storage facilities also dictates that the disposition of remains be completed as quickly as possible, particularly in the summer months. Lack of response from the family of the deceased could lead to the local authorities placing the decomposing remains in what is usually referred to as a common grave.

2. Embalming

Embalming is common in the State of Chihuahua. Most, if not all, of the Funeral Services establishments will provide embalming services.

3. Cremation

There are crematoria in most localities in the State of Chihuahua, and arrangements for cremation are handled by local Funeral Services. However, Mexican law does not permit cremation for the remains of a body that passed away from criminal action, suspicious circumstances, or is part of an official investigation.

4. Caskets and Containers

A casket containing a body or human ashes is treated as ordinary freight. Shipping companies, however, require that the body be placed in a metal lined casket which must also be put inside a transfer case. These must meet the requirements of the U.S. Public Health Service and U.S. port authorities and are provided by the funeral service. There are similar requirements for containers for human ashes.

5. Exportation of Remains

Procedures and documents for the exportation of human remains are as follows. Except as noted, all are shipping company or U.S. requirements:

Embalmed Body:

1. Embalming of the remains
2. Enclosure of the remains in a metal lined casket
3. Death certificate from the local government authority (required by U.S. customs)
4. Mortician's embalming certificate
5. Mortician's statement of placement of remains in the coffin
6. Copy of the deceased's passport or proof of citizenship

Human Ashes: (air freight)

7. Cremation certificate
8. Death certificate from local government authority (required by U.S. Customs)
9. Affidavit from local funeral director concerning contents of urn
10. Copy of the deceased's passport or proof of citizenship

6. Autopsies

Autopsies are not common in Mexico when death is due to medical or natural causes. It is, therefore, very difficult to arrange for an autopsy when the family of the deceased wishes to have one. Customarily, autopsies are only conducted when the death occurred under

unusual or suspicious circumstances and the police are involved to determine whether there was foul play. If foul play was involved or if the cause of death is not immediately known, the State Police will conduct a judicial autopsy. If the police determine that a criminal act was not the cause of death, an autopsy is usually not performed. There is no cost for a judicial autopsy.

7. Local Customs Regarding Funerals, Disposition of Remains, Mourning, Memorial Services

Mexican funerals include a wake, a funeral ceremony, the burial or cremation of the deceased, and in some cases a periodic memorial service. At a wake, the family members, relatives, and close friends often pray for the deceased's rest.

The funeral is usually on the day after the wake. The procedure is similar to the wake, and in most cases a religious mass will be offered before the burial or cremation. A cremation usually takes about two hours, and the family members, relatives, and close friends wait for the completion of the cremation at the crematorium.